



Running Hoops

The Newsletter of Kenilworth Croquet

May 2025

Contents

Editorial.....1

Club News

Club Open Day.....2

Features

Referees.....4

Little Red Book.....5

Message from Edith.....6

Miscellany.....7

Tournament Entry.....8

Competition Time

Robertshaw Cup.....9

WMF 6+ League Final.....10

Charlecote Cup11

*Congratulations to our
victorious B team who won
the Robertshaw Cup 2025 on
their first attempt!
Read report p10*



Midlands sector. And only a few weeks later, both our teams in the WMF Golf Croquet League, Team A and Team B, qualified for entry to the prestigious Robertshaw Cup, which our A Team had won the previous year. To great excitement, this year, it was the turn of the recently formed B Team, captained by Pauline Harvey, to take the honours, while the A Team, led by Philip Wood, took the Runners Up slot. Success attracts publicity, which must highlight our club as one of the strongest in the Federation.

In the same month, two of our AC players, Adrian and Mervyn, took part in a national AC tournament at Nailsea Croquet Club, near Bath, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience, with some success in their matches, and again broadcasting the name of our club. Mervyn has more to say about this on p8.

At the other extreme I have to confess that in my own first match of the year, I managed to play a WRONG BALL, not once, but 3 times! We were fortunate that we were sharing the lawn with Pauline Harvey, who reminded us of the correct procedures, but it highlighted how much we'd forgotten over the long break, and coincided with several articles on the same topic online and in the Gazette (which led me to believe I wasn't the only one whose memory had lapsed during the winter months!). So this month, I decided it's the turn of the Referees to share their experience. In the past I've introduced the Committee, discussed the job of setting out the lawns and hoops, analysed past winners on our Honours Board, covered jobs led by the Maintenance Lead, but have never mentioned Referees. Do we take them for granted – that they will always just be there whenever we have a problem, regardless of the fact that they are also engrossed in their own games, yet come over willingly to sort out our problems?



I was delighted to receive a long WhatsApp message from Edith Cheung, a popular member of our club for two seasons, and a talented player of Golf Croquet, who was beginning to learn the ropes of Association Croquet, and also keeps in touch with Adrian. I'm sure you will enjoy reading about the interesting life she leads, and seeing the lovely

photographs she has sent, p7.

Elizabeth



Once again we were blessed with a beautiful sunny day for our Open Day at the start of National Croquet Week, 2025. Volunteers arrived early to set up the lawns ready for the day and soon members and visitors were arriving to learn about our much loved sport and try their hand in relaxed games on the half lawns. Members enjoyed the opportunity of an extra day of playing, sharing their enthusiasm for croquet and passing on information about the fun, new skills and health benefits of the activity, the social activities and membership of the club.





And afterwards, what better way to finish off a lovely day, than to sit in the shade by the pavilion enjoying a cup of tea or coffee, along with fruit cake, scones with jam, cream and strawberries, and biscuits of all sorts, provided by the members, while chatting to friends and watching the continuing games on the croquet courts.



This month I decided to shine the light on the role played by our referees. The idea, as very often happens, was triggered by a comment on the Facebook Croquet Hub group by Kathy Wallace: "Don't forget the referees who selflessly leave their own games to give decisions - never looking harassed and always being relied upon to be unbiased."

And later in an article in the opening pages of the Croquet Gazette, April 2025 titled 'Hibiscus', well-known travel and sports' writer, Minty Clinch, chose to shed her humorous observations on the latest version of the Laws of Association Croquet, though many of her comments will be recognised equally by Golf Croquet players. The 'modern' version, published in 1961 and now in its 7th edition (2021), she claims, has a lot more to say about the minutiae of faults than most players can take on board. An MOC? "Come on, you must know. If you don't, 'maintenance of contact' is an infinitesimally different way of saying 'push shot'."

" 'I'll have that watched'. The ominous words ring out; a referee strides purposefully over, either irritated by the interruption or with an ego boosted by a judgement call. Meticulously, markers are placed to position your potentially errant ball by the edge of the hoop. By now you are nervous, unsure whether the risk is a crush or a double hit, but aware that the odds are on the decision going against you. As it almost always will.

"Is the ball through or not? Similar process. Amazingly, the referee may stretch out on the grass on both sides of the hoop in turn to peer for a sliver of ball invisible to the naked eye."



And for our newer members to the Club, who may believe that Minty is exaggerating, this photograph from Running Hoops Sept 2023, shows our own referee, Adrian Morris, demonstrating precisely that, while the players, Cliff Daniel, Philip Wood and Philip Mander, wait anxiously, (or not!), for his decision!

We are fortunate to have a qualified referee for AC and GC in Adrian. Mervyn Harvey is also a qualified referee in the US 6-wicket format of the game and is more than capable of handling any query on AC or GC. If you have any query while playing, both would be pleased to help but if they are not there, please ask any senior member for advice. If you have any queries on the game, Adrian would be happy to help. Email: amorris164@btinternet.com.

There is now a fresh collection of tri-fold leaflets in the pavilion, written and printed by Adrian, which summarise the rules of both Golf and Association Croquet. I would urge everyone to study and absorb the relevant leaflet, before you take to the lawns for a match. It is much easier to sort out your own problem than to draw someone else away from their own game to help you manage yours.

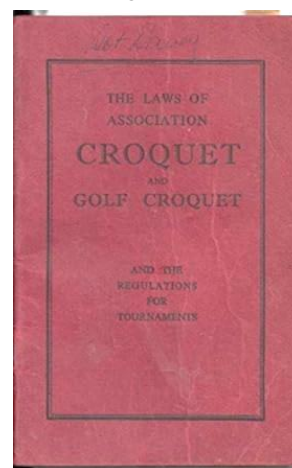
In the July 2017 issue of Running Hoops, edited by Gordon Henderson, Adrian submitted an article on the testing assessments referees face in order to qualify....

Having qualified as a GC Referee and played AC and studied the “Red Book” of the Laws of Association Croquet for over ten years, I thought it was high time that I tried the AC referee’s exam. How hard could it be? MUCH HARDER THAN I THOUGHT!! If I was going to suffer I thought it would be good to have Alan Richardson as company.

To start, Alan and I applied for the Referee’s course due to be held in Nottingham in April. Once accepted, we were sent 40 questions on AC situations to answer. These were far from easy but were aimed at identifying any weaknesses in preparation for the exam. They were also aimed at making us more aware of the detail in the “Red Book” (All the laws of the game and 48 separate pages of commentary!)

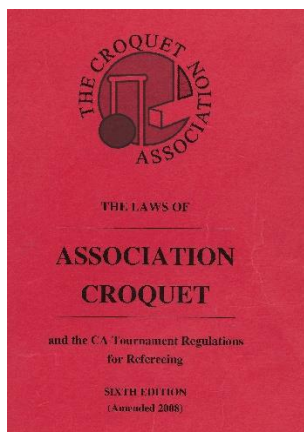
Alan and I threw ourselves at this challenge and after many late nights studying at home and some enjoyable joint sessions at the Anchor, we considered ourselves ready for the course. Twelve of us joined the two day course at the Nottingham club held by Ian Vincent, the current Chairman of the International AC Laws Committee, ably assisted by Peter Death, an experienced Examining Referee. During these two days we analysed the Red Book in the minutest detail combined with practical experience on the lawn. Two weeks later came the exam itself when Peter Death came to Kenilworth.

First were 20 multi-choice questions, some straightforward and some more challenging than I expected. Alan’s hard studying showed when he out-scored me, but we both passed. Next came the practical test on the lawn. Challenging decisions needed to be made in both static and dynamic situations. Static positions are where a decision needs to be made based on where the balls lie and how they got there. Dynamic situations are much more challenging. Strokes have to be watched very carefully and any faults identified. You wouldn’t believe how many faults an examiner can commit in one stroke!

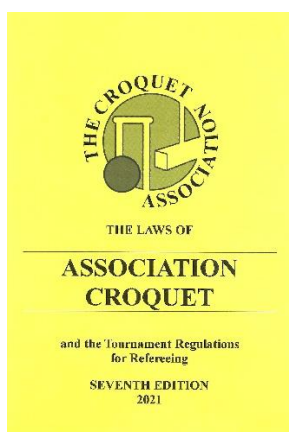


As Alan was doing his practical, I was sitting a one hour written examination with eight difficult situations where any infringement had to be identified, the remedy decided upon and the relevant laws from the Red Book quoted. Quite a challenge! We adjourned to the pub for lunch and to allow Peter time to total the marks. I made the odd mistake in the practical but passed the test. Alan scored the requisite number of marks to pass but the examiner considered that his lack of playing experience affected his confidence in making his dynamic decisions. I think this was a borderline decision. I “just scraped through” my written exam to qualify as an AC Referee.

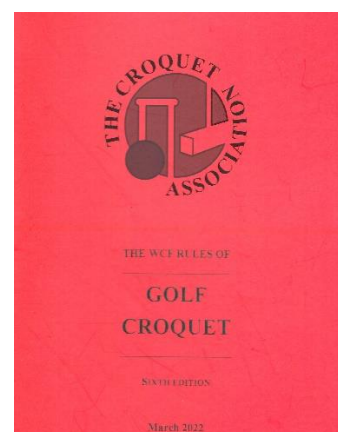
Editor: The book cover shown in the article is not actually the one in use at the time, but as below:



The old 2008 AC book



The current 2021 AC book



The current 2022 GC book

Qualifying as a referee, or indeed as a coach, gives more benefit to others and this is recognised by subsidies for Coaching and Referee courses. Croquet England provides a £25 subsidy and this is matched by the West Midlands Federation. If anyone is interested, contact Adrian.

MESSAGE FROM EDITH CHEUNG, RECENT MEMBER OF OUR CLUB

Edith has been busy since she left us in the Autumn of last year, to move to Prestwick in Scotland with her son's family. A seasoned traveller, Edith then set off for Germany to spend some time with her daughter's family over Christmas and January. After a few months she returned to Prestwick, where unfortunately some arthritis in one knee prevented her from getting in touch with the nearby Auchincruive Croquet Club as she had intended to do.

After treatment helped to reduce the pain, Edith was travelling again, this time back to Hong Kong in April, but she hopes to visit the local croquet club when she returns once more to Scotland in July.

Edith thanked Adrian for teaching her how to play AC and finished with a message to us all: "I miss all my croquet teammates, they are so kind to me. Please say hello to them for me."

Members may remember that Edith had played Gateball in Hong Kong, which helped her to adapt very quickly to golf croquet in our club. She told us about the game of Gateball in Running Hoops, July 2023, and even brought along her Gateball equipment to show us and allow us all to try using it. Now back in Hong Kong, she is playing her beloved Gateball again, and has sent us these lovely photographs of her in action and posing with her teammates.

We send our greetings to Edith and hope she will keep in touch with us on her travels.



Gateball is played with mallets and balls which are lighter than our croquet equipment. The game is played by a team of 5 members who, each in turn, have to run their ball through all 3 'gates' and peg out in the same way as in Association Croquet. The advantages of the game are that matches are restricted to 30 minutes playing time, and the sport can equally be played indoors or out.

NEW WHITE LINE MARKER Nick Hegan (Maintenance Lead)

This winter marked the acquisition of a new line marking machine after the old one had finally given up the ghost at the end of last year. It had a number of things wrong with it, and was showing wear in several areas.

For continuity we opted for a very similar one as the old one. Some clubs use spray types but apparently the aerosol paint cartridges are expensive and don't last very long.

Philip Wood, our lawn marker and hoop setter, commented first of all that in this photograph, the middle roller is missing! However, it works well, and although it lacks the pointer that Ray Clipson devised for the old one, he is finding that he can get it to follow the old line well enough, provided that it has not become obliterated, and he can see the old line. When marking a new line following string he finds he can get a really good straight line.



CAN KENILWORTH BEAT THIS?!!! (From the Croquet Gazette April 2025)



June Jury (right) a member of Ramsgate Croquet Club for over 36 years, has recently become the first title holder of a new Guinness World Record; **THE OLDEST COMPETITIVE CROQUET PLAYER (FEMALE)** at 93 years and 107 days, at Ramsgate Croquet Club on 23rd September 2023. In the season of 2023, June, a retired nurse at the age of 93, got to the final of not one, but two internal club GC singles handicap competitions. In 2023 she was playing off a 6 handicap.

STEVE BEER (From Croquet Hub, 3rd April, Facebook)

As the season in the UK gets under way again, I would like to express what wonderful volunteers we have around the country. Not just for Tournaments and Competitions, but also those who make things happen at Club level - the officers and the mowers, the line markers, the hoop setters, the match organisers, the tea makers and biscuit buyers, the maintenance crews and everyone else involved. I am proud not just to be one of you, but primarily to be among such brilliant, committed and fantastic people. You/we are what croquet is really all about.

KATHY WALLACE replied:

Don't forget the referees who selflessly leave their own games to give decisions - never looking harassed and always being relied upon to be unbiased."

ENTERING TOURNAMENTS AT OTHER CLUBS

8

Mervyn Harvey, Club GC Coach, and Level 1 Facilitator

Croquet England is keen to support and encourage players of all levels to participate competitively and develop their skills, and has come up with a framework they call “The Player Pathway”. The processes are exactly the same for GC and AC. Level One of that pathway begins at club level, and Adrian and I were the natural ones to volunteer for the role of “Level 1 Facilitator”, not just because it fits neatly with our existing coaching roles, but also because we regularly play in tournaments at other clubs.

The natural path has long been for players to learn to play within their club, and after some beginner coaching and social play may begin to play in internal club tournaments and local Federation Leagues and events. Level one of Player Pathway aims to facilitate the progression of these players into the coaching and tournament structures of Croquet England, providing information and support to players entering their first Croquet England event through to their progression to level two. The focus is on providing support at a club level to help and encourage players to become confident entering and participating in Croquet England events.

For those keen to progress further, Levels Two to Five will provide help at regional and national level. This is a new initiative, and so this will initially lean heavily on things like Development Squads that are already in place. At our club, we have established processes to coach “Beginners” and “Improvers”, and we will initiate further help as appropriate. But please don’t wait to be asked if you want to explore this further.

So – what does taking part in other clubs’ tournament look like? There are two types of tournament: (a) level play, open to those whose handicaps are within a certain range, and (b) handicap play, open to those in a much wider range. Those of you who want to play competitively will already be familiar with how handicap tournaments work, and so I am going to concentrate mainly on level play – particularly GC unless I say otherwise.

Level play only works well when you are playing against those of a similar standard to you. Those who read about Pauline’s and my tournament play in the US will recall that they have an established structure where there are no restrictions on who can enter, but players are then divided into groups of, typically 8, based on handicap – so you can expect to play most of those in your block and that their handicaps will be within two or three of yours. In the UK, more and more clubs have separate competitions for: “B Level”, 4+, “C level”, 7+, and “D Level”, 10+. So, even if you are a 12, there are tournaments where you can expect to win some games. Note that none of those levels have an upper limit, and so an ambitious 8 could enter a “B level” event – but if it is over-subscribed, I expect they will allocate places to those with the lowest handicaps. There are clubs within driving distance of us who run all three levels of competition. Information is available in the “Fixtures Calendar” of the Croquet England website – www.croquet.org.uk – but please ask Adrian, me or a Committee member if you have difficulty logging in.

Exactly how each tournament works will depend on the number of entries. I recently played in an AC tournament at Nailsea where I found myself in a section with ten players. In that longer form of the game, we typically play five games over two days, and so you don’t play all of your opponents. Games are organised on the “Swiss” basis, which basically means that after each round you are paired to play against someone with a similar record to you, and so your games always end up being reasonably evenly matched.

I have been playing in AC tournaments for many years, and remember how daunting my first one was – because I didn’t know how things worked, and everyone else seemed to. But it has given me the opportunity to play at some great venues, including Hurlingham and Nottingham, and I am starting to get to know some of my opponents, who are much more friendly than I feared they might be. If you are thinking of taking the plunge, I hope you would have sought out those who have already done so, and therefore gain some idea of what you are likely to experience. This initiative from Croquet England formalises this, and Adrian and I would be more than happy to guide you through the process, so that you are well prepared.



THE ROBERTSHAW CUP 20 MAY Mervyn Harvey (Tournament Director)

Hold the front page! Kenilworth B won the Robertshaw Cup at their first attempt, edging out Kenilworth A, who won it last year.

The Cup is played for by the teams who filled the first 4 places in the previous season's West Midlands Federation Golf Croquet League. The format was devised by Paul Robertshaw of Himley (who donated the cup), to accommodate four teams of three playing on two lawns. Each team plays a match against each other team over three rounds, in which each player plays their opposite number (based on their rank within their team, according to handicap), while the other two in each team play a doubles game.



Summing the handicaps (in brackets beside names below) of the three players in each team gives a feel for relative strengths. The teams and their total handicaps (in order of strength) were:

Broadwas	2	(-1, 0, 3)
Kenilworth A	4	Phil B (-1), Phil M (2), Philip W (3)
Kenilworth B	10	Ian (3), Nick (3), Pauline H (4)
Himley	10	(1, 4, 5)

The order of the games is drawn at random, and the fact that Kenilworth's two teams were drawn to play each other in the final grouping added to the ensuing drama.

In the first series of matches, Kenilworth A beat Himley, whose top player was recovering from injury, and Kenilworth B outperformed by some margin to beat Broadwas. Ian starred in that match by beating his opponent, who had a handicap of minus 1.

In the second series, Kenilworth A beat Broadwas and Kenilworth B beat Himley - thus setting up the intriguing final between the two unbeaten teams. But first, Broadwas took third place with a convincing victory over Himley.

In the first and third rounds of the A v B decider, B won each of the singles but lost the doubles. The second round turned out to be the decisive one, with B winning the singles and the doubles, thus securing a 4-2 win over A. Nick had a decisive win over his higher-ranked opponent – as did Pauline, who had the rare distinction of winning all her singles and doubles matches.

The fact that Kenilworth teams took the top two places demonstrates the strength in depth of the Club, and will hopefully encourage others to strive to improve through competitive play.

**Team:**

Tony Watmore (Captain)
Robert Zara
Jon Hodge
Jeff Lindsay

Result:

Llanidloes 12
Kenilworth 6

Shortly after we had in Kenilworth, celebrated St Georges day (April 23rd) we set off, with high hopes, to play our 2024 WMF 6+ final against Llanidloes, which was kindly being hosted by Himley Croquet Club.

Unfortunately for Kenilworth the Welsh dragon didn't read the script for the week and comfortably beat Kenilworth by 12 matches (105 hoops) to 6 matches (90 hoops) and won the inaugural WMF 6+ league and the Dave Piggott trophy – kindly donated by Dawn in memory of her husband.

The match was very competitive and played in great spirits and although the score was fairly comprehensive, 5 of the 12 matches went to the golden hoop. The stars of the show were Adam Britton (6) and David Mullan (8) who won all their matches and their pairs combination. Not sure whether the lurid orange team shirts had a distracting effect on the Kenilworth team!!!

The lawns were a little variable but the same for both sides, although there were some running repairs as the local mole population had taken an interest in the croquet lawns, and the location and backdrop is superb.

The weather was kind and Himley as hosts were superb, with endless supply of pork pies, sausage rolls, cakes and tea/coffee. All in all a great day enjoyed by everyone and we go again as the fixtures for the 2025 season are now being finalised.

NB Both teams wondered whether there was any interest from any other WMF teams (Stourbridge, Ludlow) as it really is a social competition to be enjoyed by the wider 6+ croquet community.



CHARLECOTE CUP (cont)

11

The Charlecote Cup is restricted to players of handicaps 4 and above. Known as the 'Winter Cup', jump shots are not allowed, in order to avoid damage to the lawns before they have thickened up to their summer standard. For this reason, it would be an ideal competition for newer players who would like to venture into the world of competitive play without having to face meeting the club's strongest players!

The first round of games for the Charlecote Cup 2025 have been played out and the group winners announced as:

Group A

Leader

Tony Watmore

Pauline Dennis

(Incomplete)

Jeff Lindsay

Gordon Henderson

Group B

Val Moss

Elizabeth Thomson

Jon Hodge

Elizabeth Thomson

Alan Worrall

Group C

Jaspal Jheeta

Pauline Harvey

Pauline Harvey

Bob Phelps

Robert Zara



Lynne Breedon presents the Charlecote Cup to Bob Phelps, last year's winner, who was unable to attend the presentation dinner in March.

The places for the Quarter Finals have been announced as:

Pauline Harvey v Val Moss

Elizabeth Thomson v Jaspal Jheeta

Tony Watmore v Bob Phelps

Alan Worrall v Pauline Dennis

Good luck to all contestants.

Editor: What an impressive start to the croquet season we have had as a club! There's a sense of optimism among team members, as they look forward to their first matches in the regional leagues, and by individuals, as they set off to take part in national tournaments, with the excitement of playing on the immaculate lawns of the top clubs in England, as Mervyn describes in his article on Croquet England's Player Pathway.

With the competitive season also warming up in our own club and the Lawn Bookings beginning to fill up, it is rewarding that people still find time to contribute to Running Hoops. This month, it was great to have new member, Sue Cable, helping out with photography on the Open Day. It can be difficult trying to play and capture the atmosphere at the same time, so thanks, Sue, for sharing your photographs, and great to have you on board the RH team!

Thanks also to Adrian and Mervyn for helping with the more formal topics that involve the wider croquet fraternity, whether the West Midlands Federation or Croquet England itself, and to Adrian for giving us an insight to the very strict training and assessing of referees, that makes their decisions so respected by players.

Then our team captains keep us in touch with their teams' achievements in the important match reports, and as you look through this May issue of RH, you will see even more names of contributors, so if you are new to the Club, feel free to write about anything croquet related, your own pathway into croquet, or something you read somewhere else...

And as ever, thanks to Ian, who I hope will be sending this out by tomorrow night!

Elizabeth
